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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2006

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Diego **Simancas** (Mexico)

II. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Meetings management and improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

3. Improved utilization of conference facilities

(a) United Nations Office at Nairobi

Introduction and overview

1. At its 476th meeting, on 11 September 2006, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences concerning the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The Committee heard an oral report by the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management on his recent visit to the Office. For his first visit away from Headquarters since his recent appointment, he had chosen the only main United Nations office to be located in a developing country and had been impressed by the professionalism of the team and its fine performance under difficult circumstances. Despite the need to rely on extrabudgetary resources for 50 per cent of its funding, the Division of Conference Services enjoyed very good management and team spirit was high. However, unlike the other three duty stations, central planning and coordination functions were being funded exclusively from extrabudgetary resources. The Government diplomatic police force was making a strong contribution to enhancing the safety and security of United Nations personnel. The Government was also very supportive in many other ways and valued the United Nations presence.

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2. Some upcoming large meetings would test the limits of its physical plant. Utilization of the interpretation team had increased to 53 per cent, although that figure did not reflect assignments abroad. The Office had met all requests by regional groups for meetings with interpretation. There continued to be problems in filling vacant interpretation posts, particularly Arabic posts. Of the successful candidates from the last Arabic interpretation examination, none were interested in working in Nairobi, and to date the Office of Human Resources Management had not felt that a targeted exam for Nairobi would be fruitful or consistent with United Nations human resource rules. As a solution, a candidate who had come close to passing the exam had been given an 11-month contract in Nairobi and was being trained in the hope that the candidate would be able to pass the exam on a second try. There had been, unfortunately, no internal candidate for the new P-3 information technology post.

Discussion

3. Additional information was given on the diplomatic protection unit and security liaison committee established by the Government of Kenya to work with the United Nations, and the commitment of the Government to the security and safety of United Nations personnel was commended. A number of delegations stressed the importance of ensuring equitable treatment for the United Nations Office at Nairobi as one of the four main United Nations duty stations. It was noted with satisfaction that all meetings of the Nairobi-based United Nations bodies in 2005 had taken place in Nairobi in conformity with the headquarters rule. Concern was expressed that there was no predictable funding for the central planning and coordination function. Several delegations thought that a special exam for Nairobi could yield useful results. It was decided that vacancy issues could be further discussed directly with the representative of conference services in Nairobi during the videoconference to be held on 13 September.